

The Last Best Hope of Earth



*"We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last
best hope of Earth."*—ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Second Annual Message to Congress, 1862

HARRY SCHERMAN

The Last Best Hope of Earth

A PHILOSOPHY FOR THE WAR



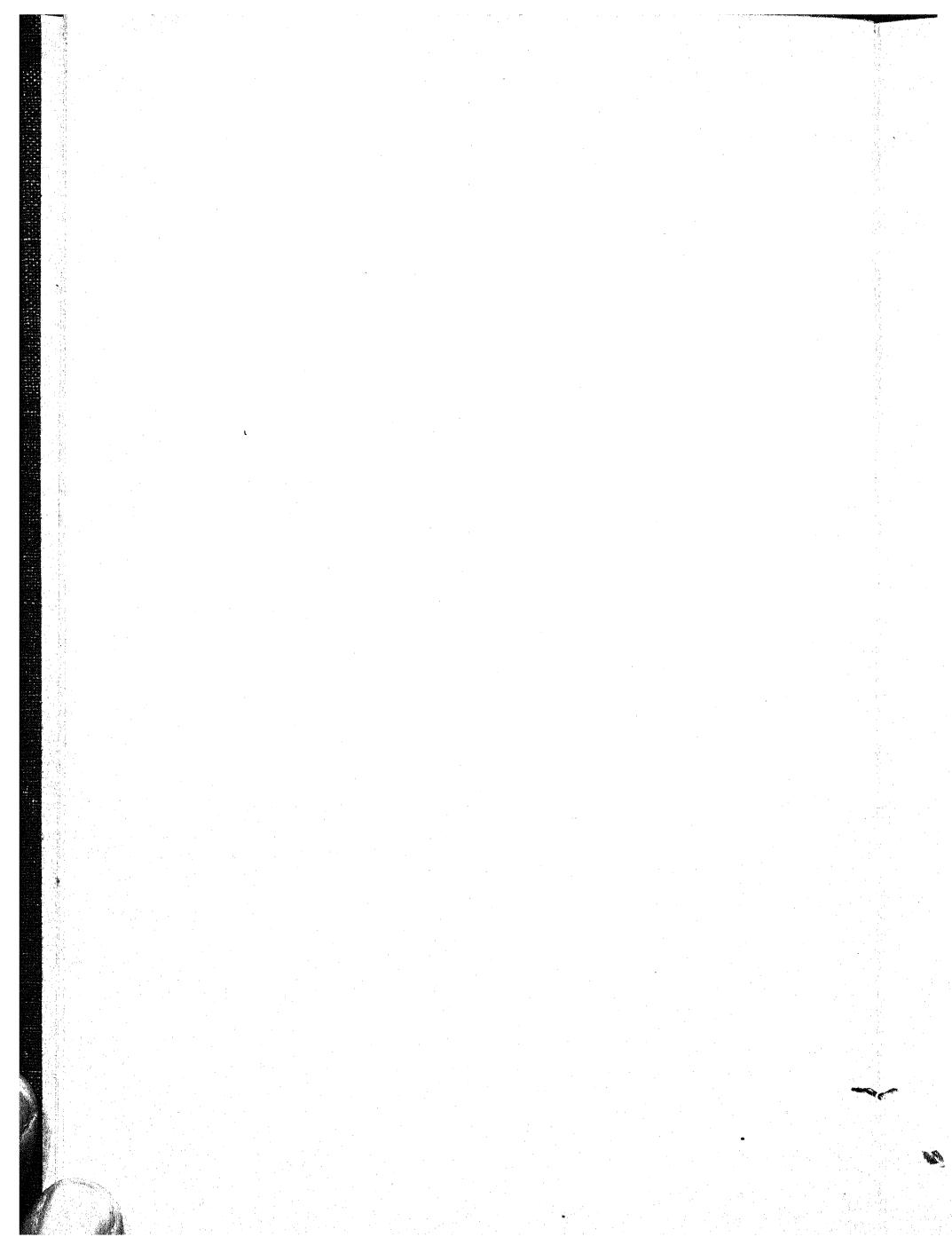
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To B. K. S.





I



ABOUT 83% of the American public, according to Dr. George Gallup, expect us to be in this war before it is over. What shall we be fighting for? On this question his investigators find—as he puts it—fog, and a craving to be out of it. There is a deeply-felt need among most people for a philosophy concerning the war more satisfying than inclusive words like “freedom” and “democracy” and “security” and “defense” provide. There is need for a philosophy so basic that no wedging doubts can shake it.

For it is only with a sort of inarticulate com-

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mon sense that so many Americans have come to the belief that this is "our war," and so many others are on the verge of believing it. They cannot, except haltingly, tell why.

The reason for this core of certainty-within-uncertainty seems plain, upon reflection. This is a war taking place in a highly complex world, which itself is far from being fully comprehended by the general run of human beings.

It is impossible, I myself believe, to acquire an unshakable philosophy about the war until one great simple truth about modern human society is recognized: that all the diverse peoples on this planet are now bound together, inseparably, in an economic world-union. It is not yet *a de jure*, a contractual, union. But this does not minimize—on the contrary, it emphasizes—its indestructible character.

The evolution to this state began in the ear-

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liest days of recorded human history and has proceeded inexorably in spite of many retardations. Less than two hundred years ago it received an enormous impetus with the beginning of the Steam Age. Within the past fifty years undreamed-of inventions and magic means of production and quick transportation of goods have speeded its tempo. It is now at an advanced stage. There are plain imperfections to it, and they have been properly stressed by men of good will. But this needed improvement does not mean that the evolutionary trend itself can be reversed. This is what "human civilization" has become; indeed, almost what we mean by the words.

While this economic, and cultural, world-unification has been speeded up, political unification has lagged. That lag has meant endless obstruction. The economic interests of the

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greater portion of mankind now demand that this lag must cease. There can be no end to periodic world-wide war until the peoples of the Earth use their intelligence, in some way, to progress as much toward political unification as, quite plainly, they now have in their economic and cultural relationships.

With this conception as a background, the issue between the American and the German peoples is clear and deep. It seems insoluble except by a decisive war, or unless the Germans totally change. For we shall not.

Is this more advanced political unification of human society to be imposed by armed force or achieved by a meeting of minds?

Is it to be maintained "for a thousand years" as a military world-state, in a new global Pax Roman run from Berlin as a center, or by some means of peaceable and equitable collabo-

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ration among the diverse peoples of the Earth?

That is what the war is about, and this is the service the British, as the center of resistance to the Nazis, are rendering to the human race. For this bedrock issue is what their suffering, and that of all their allies, will settle.

II

Most of us are only dimly aware—many of us not at all—of the *actuality* of this Earthwide economic unification of mankind. The fascinating details of its organization are not taught, as they should be, to children in the schools. Nor is there any daily experience common to many men which would make good this deficiency of the schoolmen. Specialization of occupation has become so refined in the modern world that only the most inquiring—until a great crisis makes us all more inquiring—come to any deep awareness of how all the human inhabitants of the

Earth lean upon one another, delicately, like two billion playing cards.

There is a pertinent historic fact here which should be in all primers—and is probably in none. Since 1750, about the beginning of the Age of Steam, the human population of the Earth has more than tripled. It was then about 660,000,000; it is now well over 2,100,000,000. This increase has not been an evolutionary phenomenon with biological causes. Prior to it, the scholars find, for long long centuries there was no such “definite population trend. Periods having an excess of births must have alternated with periods having an excess of deaths.” Yet there was an evolution—it took place in the world’s economic organization. Thus the true import of this great fact is plain: 1,500,000,000 more human beings *can now remain alive on the Earth’s surface*, can support themselves by working for

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others who in turn work for them. This extraordinary tripling of human population in six short generations finds its final explanation in the rapid progress toward Earthwide economic unification which took place during the same period.

Thus most of us are now alive—and most of us are kept alive—by this vast cooperative world society that has evolved. If it were conceived that tomorrow the infinite variety of goods that men produce *had to be confined* within the national boundaries where they are produced, tens of millions of men, women and children would swiftly die of starvation. Hundreds of millions more would be in the last extremes of destitution and misery.

Goods are the great travellers over the Earth's surface, far more than human beings. Little men can be conceived of, fancifully, as merely convoying the goods in their now well-settled

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streams. Endlessly these streams of goods criss-cross, as on Martian canals, with hardly an inhabited spot on the globe unvisited.

From our own boundaries, for example—taking merely the principal items—grains and other foods flow endlessly to feed numberless foreign mouths; tobacco products to solace hundreds of millions; moving pictures to amuse them; cotton to clothe them; oil to keep countless machines other than our own moving; and—in larger quantity than anything—machines themselves in fascinating variety, the best in the world. While this is happening, as the largest station for incoming goods on the globe, other great streams of goods cross these outgoing ones; sugar, cocoa, coffee, bananas, spices, and a hundred other foreign-grown foods; rubber from the East Indies; tin from there, too, and from Bolivia; furs from Russia; timber and

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pulp from Canada; from all the seven seas, metals and minerals to keep our myriad industries whirring; silk from Japan and flax from Ireland; luxuries from Europe. This is also true of every other people, of course.

Here, as raw material for reflection, is the roster of the principal exports of the different nations of the world. There are numerous other articles in every case, of course; some of them—though their quantities be small—indispensable to keep industries going and men employed in other lands.

Australia	Food and wool
Austria	Timber and paper
Argentina	Cattle, hides and wheat
Belgium	Food, textiles, coal and machines
Brazil	Coffee and cotton
Canada	Grains, metals and minerals
Ceylon	Tea and rubber
Chile	Nitrates and copper
Colombia	Coffee and oil
Cuba	Sugar and tobacco
France	Textiles, metal and luxuries

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Great Britain	Textiles, coal and machinery
Greece	Tobacco and raisins
Haiti	Coffee and sugar
Hungary	Wheat and livestock
India	Tea, nuts and jute
Holland	Manufactured products
Netherland Indies	Rubber and oil
Iceland	Food
Italy	Manufactured products
Japan	Silk and textiles
Mexico	Oil and rubber
Norway	Fish, paper and metals
Peru	Copper, oil and cotton
Philippines	Sugar and copra
Poland	Wood, fuel and base metals
Portugal	Food and wood
Rumania	Oil
Spain	Oranges, cork and olive oil
Sweden	Paper, iron and machinery
Switzerland	Manufactured products
Czecho-Slovakia	Food, textiles, metal and machines
Turkey	Tobacco, cotton and raisins
Soviet Russia	Wheat, furs, wood, oil and metals
South Africa	Wool and gold
Uruguay	Wool
Venezuela	Oil
Yugo-Slavia	Food, wood and metals

There is one immense fact here so simple that even some "experts" tend to become unconscious of it, like the air we breathe. This inconceivable

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variety and mass of goods is ceaselessly being produced within each nation *for others outside its borders*. Multitudes of men are so employed, and it is the needs of foreigners which keep them employed. Indeed, it is these needs which have actually called into being a large portion of the enterprises and occupations.

This, however, is less than half the story of interdependence. The livelihood of hundreds of millions of others is maintained, very often created, by the *incoming* products from other lands. It would be hard to find a common article of use in any advanced nation the price, quality or constitution of which does not in some measure, and often critically, rest upon products emanating from foreign sources. An immediate example that will occur to everyone is the automobile. It has transformed modern civilization and particularly American life. What would

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have happened in this momentous economic development without rubber from the East Indies? Or, in other lands, without oil from the United States and a few other countries?

One can take all the boasted technological advances of the past half-century, and the same pointed question can be asked of some plant, some metal, some substance, some article of manufacture, some invention that has been used to enrich the entire earth and not a single people. The incontestable truth is that there is a clear planetary indivisibility of production and employment.

But the bonds among men go far deeper than goods. Culture too knows no frontiers, and never has. I do not refer to the arts—to music, painting, great literature. These graces of civilization bind men of all lands together in spirit. They are bound together more practically, one might

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say, by the ever-advancing knowledge of humankind, as represented particularly in its science. Men of science have always been and still are the most natural and confirmed of internationalists. They work with one another over every frontier and shamelessly appropriate from one another whatever new knowledge any seeker, in any field, gains. There is no such trifling conception as plagiarism here.

Neither can the faith of men in one another be imprisoned within national boundaries. I think that I fairly established, in *The Promises Men Live By*, that reliance upon economic promises —what economists dismally call the “debt-and-credit system”—is at the root of human civilization, the explanation of both its growth and its present intricate organization. Debt and credit have never, from the remotest past, recognized any frontier. They have flowed over all, tying

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men of one land to men of another. The ceaseless streams of goods now flowing between all nations is matched by something invisible—the confidence, *perpetually justified by performance*, of all the participants in one another. This closest of all economic relationships, debt and credit, has built up and still maintains human society in its planetary economic indivisibility.

Mankind is still moving, and moving fast, on this road of world economic unification. Think how the airplane carrying freight will alone intensify it within the next twenty-five years! It has not been by chance that a single metal, gold, has come to be used by every nation to measure, directly or indirectly, the value of its paper money. And is it any wonder that those rhythmic business cycles which still have great elements of mystery to the most careful economists, are now Earthwide phenomena; that all

the world prospers together, suffers together—and complains together—as they occur? Modern human society is an economic whole.

III

WHEN ITS ACTUALITY is once recognized, many blurred notions about the war fall into a more meaningful order. Its first value is to make clear the very nature of the war. The Germans started it. To what end? Their political literature for decades, and the speeches of their present leaders for eight years, reiterate the purpose openly. The Germans propose to be, as a single people, in final control *for their prime benefit* of this economic world-union which human civilization has achieved.

One of their basic notions, Herr Rauschning revealed, is that the “technical means” for such

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planetary control by a single people now exist. By "technical means" they imply first, necessarily, the military subjugation of the entire globe.

Allied with this is another basic notion which so far has simply amused men and women of other lands—that the Germans are a "master race." But in minds perverted enough to harbor this anthropological nonsense, who can be surprised that the line between *a* "master race" and *the* "master race" becomes non-existent? The notion becomes less amusing when one looks upon the acts it results in; and it becomes ominous when reflection reveals its true character: that it is nothing but a crazy rationalization, justifying and masking to the Germans themselves, the cold purpose to control, for their first benefit as a people, this great economic world-union which has come into being.

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The Nazi leaders have made no secret of their own conception of the shape of the future, but too few Americans know in detail what they are. For the near future the Nazi blueprint visualizes three great "geo-political" empires, as they call them. The first would be their own, covering most of the great land-mass of Europe, Asia and Africa. Great Britain, it was originally conceived—as a degenerate people which would never fight again—was to be a sort of willing subordinate partner to Germany, such as Vichy France at this moment has become. The Italians, too—when it was thought they could be troublesome—were to be permitted by the Nazis to have a sort of sub-empire within their own, covering Southern Europe, North Africa and part of the Near East. The second great empire would be ruled by the Japanese. It would cover East Asia, all the Mongolian and Malayan peoples. The

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third great empire would take in the entire Western Hemisphere. It would be ruled by the United States.

But this freehanded apportionment of the liberty, labor and resources of hundreds of millions of human beings is a mere way-station to a grand finale. It is a concession, in terms of time, to distant peoples whose power and resources are at the moment manifest. How could their own pre-eminence remain secure, for the "thousand years" of glory Herr Hitler has promised, with two great and open rivals in existence? Eventually, in the Nazi view, there can be but one ruling people of a unified world. They have nominated themselves for the office, they are fully determined it shall be themselves. They refer to themselves as "lords of the world."

The fate in turn of Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Holland,

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Luxembourg, France, Rumania, Yugo-Slavia, Greece, and now Russia, plainly shows that the Nazi effort is religiously following the grand scheme of this ambition, and following it on a timetable. We ourselves merely come at the end and in due time, if we wait.

This war, then, is best understood as a war to defeat the insane effort of a single people, numbering eighty million, to be supreme, for their special benefit, in an already unified world society numbering over two billion people. It has been called a "civil war." It has, indeed, likenesses to our own Civil War, but it also has differences, and it is illuminating to identify both. Our Civil War was fought to preserve both a contractual and an economic union of semi-sovereign states. (Incidentally, it is instructive right now to remember—in view of the calls for "unity"—that the need for that union's preser-

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vation was far from being universally recognized at the time. Lincoln was reviled—in the North as much as the South—far more generally than Mr. Roosevelt has been today.) The philosophy and effort of the seceding states was to break the existing union. This is not the philosophy and effort of the Germans. The effect of their effort, as we have seen, is toward greater unification, toward a political unification to match the economic, but one that would be under their sole management and for their prime benefit. Despite this crucial difference, the present war is like our own great Civil War in one respect. On the part of all the opponents of the Germans it is plainly an effort to preserve—as our Civil War was—a *free* economic union, well-established even if it is not contractual. The benefit of all peoples is the end consideration. The greater political unification would take

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place, as the economic union slowly did, by orderly and peaceable adjustment among all peoples, but with more intelligent attention—on the part of Governments—to those imperfections in the existing economic world-union which clearly call for improvement.

The final issue, therefore, becomes plain, both as to method and ultimate purpose: are men going to *perfect* an already unified world society under the whip of armed force, or by a free meeting of minds? And is this union to be perfected for the prime benefit of one people, or of all?

IV

JUST AS the nature of the war is illuminated by a recognition of the existing economic unity of the world, so also are the differences among Americans, up to this moment, explained by it.

What has really divided the extreme interventionists and isolationists? Who is so intolerant as not to see that they are deeply in unity on one vital point: that the long best interests of our own people constitute the end to be sought? When one talks five minutes to any ardent isolationist or interventionist, in a mood of analysis and not persuasion, what really divides them becomes apparent. One side recognizes that our

hundred and thirty million people are not only an inseparable part, but the most important part, of this existing economic world-union. The other simply does not recognize the *actuality* of this unification.

In between the extremists on both sides lies the great bulk of the American public. I think it is fair appraisal of their viewpoint, and Dr. Gallup's surveys prove it, that in an amorphous way they recognize that we are an ineradicable part of a great world society. They do not in detail see "just how," but they understand that we are. One can then trace to the *unclearness of this popular understanding* the progress of public opinion on the question as to how far we shall go in active participation. Events alone, it seems, can sharpen that understanding—not talk, not argument.

Looking backward one can see predominant

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American opinion changing with recognition of one thing: the danger of total Nazi success. In the beginning, for almost a year, that danger to most persons was non-existent. The war was "phony." This complacency was first brutally challenged by Norway, and then electrified into a complete about-face with the swift subjugation of Belgium, Holland and France. For the first time in our history we proceeded to draft an army before the declaration of a war. Our piddling military and naval preparations overnight began to be transformed into a war effort which, as the months have proceeded, has become as great as that which we put forth at the height of the last war.

Equally revolutionary was the change in our attitude toward Great Britain. The apathy which existed up to that date with the actual obstruction to Britain—embodied in the arms

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embargo, the Johnson Act, the Neutrality Act, the cash-and-carry provisions—went down the drain overnight. Immediately our national policy became as simple and clear-cut as Lincoln's. In our own interest, not in hers, Great Britain could not be allowed to be subjugated like France by the Nazis. But why not? "In our own interest"—what does that mean?

Does it not indicate an all-pervasive recognition, even if it is unclear in detail, that our own long future well-being would be in certain jeopardy if Great Britain, the last bastion of a free world before our own, were to fall before this onrush of a mad people to control the present economic world-union?

Opinion has thus changed and will continue to change with events, and this key—the degree of recognition that exists among Americans of our ineradicable participation in an economic

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world society—is, in my opinion, the best guide to follow in answering the question, shall we get into the war, and when? The great mass of American public opinion, as our national policy since Dunkirk indicates, inclines to a “shooting” intervention. But, clearly, also, it inclines that way as the need for it seems to become more or less acute with events. As the likelihood for success of the German ambition increases, the date of our own active participation nears. As that likelihood diminishes, if it does, our “shooting” participation, it seems most likely, will be deferred.

There is an illuminating parallel here with the last war. Those with good memory, which the records will substantiate for young people, will recall that we did not get in the last war until one thing happened: until the outbreak of unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917 made it seem

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that Great Britain might soon be defeated. Suddenly triumph of the pan-Germans seemed no longer possible, but probable. Almost overnight all indecision ended, all division in American opinion—wider then than now—vanished. Within six months of a national election celebrating our abstention from the war, we were in it—“to save the world for democracy.” In other words, the same unclear but vital general recognition of our basic position in the world structure was operative then, as it has been in the past two years. It will again bring us into the war only when events make clear beyond any doubt that the unified world society—of which we are so great a part—is approaching *successful* domination by the Germans.

This slowness may be disheartening to the British, but it is a sad hard fact that it is the way all free peoples go to war. It was true of them-

selves. The long tortuous course of diplomatic finagling, on the part of both Great Britain and France prior to the war, can be best understood as inability to understand that the Nazis meant business when they set their youth to singing: "Tomorrow we own the world." The absence of that popular recognition explains Munich and the whole "appeasement" record. After 1933 a big minority of Englishmen vividly appreciated, and notably Mr. Churchill, the ever-advancing threat to themselves, and that it called for "stopping Hitler" long, long before Munich. But events only could implant this understanding predominantly among the British and French peoples.

Before a free people can be persuaded to take the final plunge into war it seems that danger must be hanging over them like an immense breaking wave.

V

LOOKING at the war from this key-conception, one heartening fact about it also becomes clear. The Germans cannot win such a war. The two basic notions which animate them—that two billion human beings can be held in subjection by a single “master people” for its prime benefit; and second, that “the technical means exist” to make this now possible—could only originate among a people as politically inexperienced as the Germans have always shown themselves to be. The “thousand years” of the Nazi State which the mad Hitler promises his young people

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could be nothing but a thousand years of rebellion.

One must laugh, if one is not aghast, at the infantilism that could seriously formulate such political purposes in the twentieth century. Imagine, if one can, all the proud peoples of the Earth—prouder, if less arrogant, than the Germans—passively submitting to it for a single year of the thousand. In a thousand days or less, with ourselves actively in the war, this mad theory of a German world-state will topple into as deep oblivion as Alexander's empire.

This can be predicted so categorically because, plainly, this insane ambition is bucking, like a feeble animal, a long glacier-like evolution still moving inexorably on its way. Human society indeed has unified itself, but that evolution has taken place to an accompanying development of political freedom of peoples from the subjuga-

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tion of others. There have been exceptions, but the historic rule is plain. The only way this evolutionary development of human society can be continued is still by adjustment and agreement among peoples, but now consciously instead of unconsciously.

The Germans cannot win this war, no matter how great their transitory military successes, because the organized will of all the rest of mankind will never allow them to achieve the control they seek; much less to maintain it.

This impervious will has had its voice. "We will not permit," said President Roosevelt, "and will not accept this Nazi shape of things to come." Nor did Winston Churchill speak alone for the British in saying: "We shall go on to the end; we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans . . . we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds,

we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.” That is the will, over the world, that the purblind Nazis must meet. The bitter hate they have raised in every conquered people of Europe is a mere reflection of it, momentarily suppressed and biding its time.

The logic-mad Nazi idea that the “technical means exist” to achieve a world empire held in subjection by force ignores only one thing: two billion human beings.

VI

THIS CONCEPTION of the nature of the war has a final great value: it clarifies the burning question of the peace that must be set up.

The historic joint Churchill-Roosevelt proclamation maps out a blueprint of broad principle upon which reconstruction must proceed. The heart of that statement remains the simple war-aim, and peace-aim, that has been proclaimed by both these leaders and all their followers many times: "Hitlerism must be destroyed." But what is "Hitlerism?"

As we have seen, in its essence it is an avowed effort of the Germans to control, for their prime

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benefit, an already unified world society. Necessarily, then, the basic aim of the opposing side must be to defeat that effort so utterly that it will never be tried again; just as the idea of "secession" in the United States has forever gone from the minds of Americans.

When Mr. Churchill keeps on stating, then, that the first aim of the war is to win it, that is no meaningless aim; it is a great aim. It is on all fours with Lincoln's great simple aim of our Civil War: to preserve an existing union of states.

Moreover, Hitlerism—when its essence is so understood—must be destroyed inside Germany. To say this is impossible is mere defeatism. Perhaps it is true that the peculiar quality of the German mind cannot be changed, but the ideas in that mind—*as to what all other peoples will stand for*—can certainly be changed.

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Neither Mr. Churchill nor Mr. Roosevelt, in their joint statement or at other times, have been so unwise as to try to make at this time an exact blueprint of the peace. For it must be a practicable peace; and the *sine qua non* of practicability is agreement and adjustment among peoples. The minds of most men must meet in this next peace, and long be satisfied. That is an infinitely more difficult task than war, and cannot be improvised. The hardest governmental job that ever faced the world will be the next peace. But while its hard details cannot now exactly be foreseen, the solid basic principle upon which it has to be set up is made plain by this conception of the war.

An economic and cultural world-union is in existence. That great fact must determine the nature of the peace-effort. This unification is growing closer and more intricate with every

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year. It must be matched by a world political organization which *limits the sovereignty* of each and every nation, wherever the exercise of that sovereignty irresponsibly takes no account of the economic interests of all the unified peoples.

Whether this partial relinquishment of sovereignty can in the beginning go to the extent of our own federated states is something that only conference and adjustment can determine. Perhaps it is too much to expect that modern statesmen will be as far-seeing and audacious in tolerance as our own Founding Fathers.

It is fitting, however, for Americans particularly to remember that these great men were not so fearful of "limitation of sovereignty," when necessity clearly imposed it. Indeed, they adopted it as their key principle, and the strongest nation in the history of man was the result. It is interesting to see modern realists coming

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around to the wisdom of these shrewd old-timers. I notice the following lately in an issue of *The Economist* of London: "the absolute sovereignty of the state, operating on two different planes—the national and the international—has wrought more havoc in the recent life of man than any other single principle."

Forgetting their own history, many Americans today blanch at the mere words, "limitation of sovereignty." Yet they would fully agree that, in our own long interests, worldwide war must end, and that therefore there has to be what has been called a "peace-enforcement union." Enforce peace—how? Order is maintained within every boundary by police. That is the first function of "sovereignty." When we talk of "international policing," then—to maintain a worldwide peace—it is a mere phrase to help the fearful delude themselves, it makes

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no sense without a higher control, a more supreme sovereignty, which in this one respect at the least must limit the sovereignty of each people.

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Until we see such an open-eyed general limitation of sovereignty, there can be no peace-enforcement union. Until this is done the economic world-union that now exists can never proceed to those benefits which human achievement in other fields now so bountifully promise. Until this is done, the universally guaranteed "freedoms" of Mr. Roosevelt are pure delusion. And until this is done, there can be no end to periodic worldwide wars, into every one of which we shall be sucked—as we were, seemingly against our will, into the First World War and now again into this.

Is it not clear that a peace based soundly upon this necessity is, as Lincoln put it, "the last best



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hope of Earth?" It is the men and women of this generation who will "nobly save or meanly lose it." To think that it will be meanly lost by no effort to achieve it, is—it seems to me—to grade the modern human being lower than all his forebears.

Who but the cheapest cynic will subscribe to that appraisal?